

LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE

REFORM SCHOOLS—DISCIPLINE.
TO THE EDITOR OF THE N. Y. TRIBUNE.
 SIR: In an article on Reformatory Discipline, in THE TRIBUNE of May 20, was given an interesting account of the Chicago Reform School, under the management of its present Superintendent, Mr. Nichols. Any improvement in the government of reformatory institutions is a subject of interest to many of your readers, and, with us, will rejoice in Mr. Nichols's success, and bid him "God speed" in his glorious work. But the article referred to some incorrect statements and principles:

The Chicago Reform School is illustrated as having applied its principles in its government new to most of our American reformatory institutions.

The first introduction of the grade system in this country was made by William R. Lincoln, esq., at the Vestiborough Reform School, 1848; with this difference, that the government at Mettrai appeals to the military spirit so powerful in the French nation—the plan adopted by Mr. Lincoln, to the sense of right and wrong so strong in the American heart.

The grade system is described as follows in the report of the Massachusetts Legislature for the year 1850: "The Vestiborough School for the year ending Nov. 30, 1849:

"We adopt the grade system. This system consists of four grades. Designated by the numbers one, two, three, and four. A child is not admitted to the institution he is placed in the third grade if his conduct is bad, after admonition, he is degraded, as a punishment, to the second grade, where a greater improvement is required. If he should be continuous in

There are two grades above the school two months. We also have a subdivision of the first grade, called the class of Truth and Honor School. For punishment we degrade from a higher to a lower, and for encouragement, promote from a lower to a higher rank. These grades do not refer as to intelligence, but to character, and are confined to their moral standing only, and are applied to their conduct not only in the schoolroom, but in the playground, and at home. The child where his last standing most correspond with his character is which must be the case in manhood, and which is the case in childhood. The child who is a good boy, it has a much greater effect than the most severe corporal punishment. It is a mark to value character, as, on this plan, character is the basis of character and standing, that every boy exalts in this distinction.

Neither does Mr. Nichols claim to have introduced this system for his first class of objects and designs, we have established the grade system to enable us the more easily to secure obedience and reformation in the "imitates."

The Maine State Reform School under charge of

As to the liberty allowed these boys, it is sufficient to say that at the present time there are more than a hundred engaged in farming. They are permitted to visit their friends and relatives under the direction of two officers. A part of this number are employed by the neighboring farmers, leaving the institution on Monday morning, returning on Saturday night, at the close of their week's work. They go and come uncompensated, the only power over them being exercised by the officers, who may or may not release. Quite a large number often visit the city, not only in the day but in the evening, to attend lectures and other suitable places of amusement. These in the higher grades are occasionally permitted to visit their friends, scattered over the State, and in no case have they failed to return at the

During a plea of this kind it is worthy of mention that a boy was allowed to visit his parents, who reside over sixty miles from the school. He was to start on his homeward return; he went to the wharf to embark, and found, to his surprise, that the boat had just left. He was so earnest to keep his pledge, that he ran a distance of two miles, to the steamer's neat stopping place, and succeeded in reaching it in time to board. He came from the landing. He said he had believed that if he should not succeed in overtaking the boat he would immediately start on foot for the school, and has accomplished what he undertook under the circumstances.

Within the past six weeks a boy has been sent to Massachusetts, at a *gross* two hundred miles distant, to his parents.

As to escapes, the Chicago School reports, for the first eleven months, six; since that time, none are known. During all this time, with four hundred and thirty boys, the Maine State Reform School has lost

NOTATION.

SIR: Your correspondent "A Teacher," opens a subject of great interest, which it is important to consider at once in all its bearings. The Arab system of notation with nine numerals and a zero, is based, probably, on the natural idea of counting by the tens figures. It is defective, however, from the imperfect divisibility of the number ten. This defect has been observed and commented on before. Your correspondent's suggestion to substitute eight for it is new to me, but, I think, less acceptable than one which has already been much discussed by mathematicians, that of substituting the number twelve, and using eleven numerals and a zero. Twelve is divisible by two, three, four and six. The convenience has been observed, that the Arabic numerals are the best of the three, as the least of the fabricators of the language, and is the most convenient system, it is the most important figure.

The Water Witch has been ordered to proceed to Philadelphia to convey the stores and effects of the Minister to China to the Minnesota, now lying in the harbor of Norfolk, and expected to sail on the 29th of the present month, for her destination in the East.

Canada, for Liverpool, sailed from this port at 12 o'clock yesterday. She took out 111 passengers and \$1,235.188.56 in specie. Among her passengers were the Rev. Theodore L. Cuyler and wife of this city. Also, the steamship Argo, Capt. Benson, for London and Bremen.

LAUNCHED.

Mr. John English launched from his ship yard foot of Tenth street, East River, a splendid steamer called the Portland, yesterday morning. She is 1,100 tons register, length on deck 244 feet 13, 33 feet beam, 12 feet hold; will have a beam engine, cylinder 52 inches in diameter and 11 feet stroke. She is owned by the Portland Steam Packet Company, and will run between Portland and Boston. Mr. W. H. Webb also launched from his ship yard foot of Eighth street, East River, a fine medium sized clipper bark. She is 560 tons burden, 30 feet

The United States steamer Saranac has been ordered to the Pacific, where she proceeds the steam-frigate Morriss as the flag-ship of that station, and takes the place of the John Adams.

The Naval General Court Martial, convened at Christown, has concluded the case of Lieut. Thomas W. Crozier, the 1st lieutenant of the sloop-of-war Cumberland, tried for alleged misconduct, the charges having been preferred by Commander John S. Miesner. The finding of the Court will be announced at a later date.

ing of the Court. It is stated that the gallant lieutenant was reported by his commander (who is a very strict temperance man) for rather extravagant convivial indulgence with a party of friends, on the receipt of a domestic character peculiarly gratifying to his paternal feelings. The general presumption appears to be, from the evidence in favor of the accused, and the high character he has always sustained, that he will be honorably acquitted.

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